

Powers Gets Standing Ovation In Emotional Civic Welcome

BIG STONE GAP, Va., March 12 (AP)—U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers received a standing ovation here today from his Southwest Virginia neighbors.

"I'm very thankful to all of

you who had a part in this," he told some 800 Wise County residents attending the welcome ceremonies at the National Guard Armory.

Tribute was paid the 32-year-old flyer by Government officials ranging from town may-

ors to Rep. W. Pat Jennings (D-Va.).

"I don't have words to express my feelings," Powers said. His mother and father sat to the right of the platform while Powers made his brief talk.

His father, shoe repairman Oliver Powers, blinched back tears during the program, which lasted less than an hour. His mother, Joe Powers, looked down at the floor during much of the ceremony and frequently clasped her son's hand.

Talking with newsmen afterwards, Powers said pictures released immediately after his May 1, 1960, capture by the Russians were said not to show the wreckage of his plane. "But the plane I saw in Moscow was the U-2," he said.

Powers said both wing and tail sections were intact.

He said today's welcome made up for his ordeal, and added, "I hope people realize I'm a normal man who has done a job."

Powers said he never knew Col. Rudolf Abel was involved in his release until he was turned over to American authorities.

"I am a pilot, not a speaker," Powers told the crowd with a grin.

Powers was brought to Big Stone Gap in a motorcade of about a dozen cars from his parents' home at Pound, a small mountain town about 30 miles away.

Powers said he planned to stay in Wise County a few days longer. Later, he said, he and his wife will return to Pound for more visits.

Barbara Powers, the pilot's wife was in Milledgeville, Ga., where she has been with her family.

"She wanted to go home, and I needed some time with my parents," Powers said.

He said earlier he still is employed by the Government



United Press International

U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers faced a difficult navigation problem on a muddy road at his father's farm near Pound, Va.

Sunday. Powers pitched in to help free a reporter's car from the mud when the man arrived to interview him.